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by Juanita Warner

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dangers. Most of these are printed in cat books, magazine articles, humane society pamphlets, and literature available at your vet's office. Things like *tinfoil, cellophane wrappers, plastic, strings, yarn* and *rubber bands* can all cause damage to the intestines, sometimes fatally, as well as choking that can lead to strangulation. I'd like to add one more item to the potentially dangerous list. *Pipe cleaners!* Kits and cats love to play with a *pipe cleaner*, especially if you form it into a circle and twist the ends together. But, whereas my Burmese will pick up the circle in their mouths, carry it around the house, hide it under the rug, or toss it high in the air; my Siamese will sit and gnaw away at it until they have eaten the entire pipe cleaner! Under that lovely looking innocent exterior, lurks a wire, and I can only count my blessings that none of the Siamese choked or died in all the years that I gave them pipe cleaners to play with, before I realized they were literally eating them!

Poisonous plants are another source of toxicity to the housecat as are certain *plant food additives*. Lists of these have been printed in this and other magazines and are also obtainable from your library or vet. *Cleaning fluids, ant* and *fly killers*, and just about all of your household cleaning agents can be dangerous, or fatal to your cat.

Try to think of your pet as a child and keep these items, all medicines, and anything sharp such as scissors or needles, in a secure 'cat-proof' drawer or closet.

Many of those adorable cat toys that you see for sale at your pet shop or food store are dangerous for your cat. *Never buy anything that is glued together or that has sequins or buttons attached; and never buy anything small (like a single jingle bell) that could lodge in your cat's throat.* As a matter of fact, the safest toys are those that you make yourself and that are sewn together and made of a tightly braided material. A paper bag tossed on the floor makes a great cat toy, as does a cardboard box with a few round 'doors' cut into two or three sides of it. I find that my cats like toys with a person attached. By that, I mean if you dangle a belt, or a ribbon, in front of your cat, or trail it across the floor, he will play until you get worn out! Another favorite person toy is putting your finger under the bedspread and moving it ever so slightly. Again, your pet will play until you tire of the game.

Some dangers to the indoor cat, though, do not seem to be covered in most available literature and we've talked about most of these at one time or another through this column, but have never gathered them all together in one article before. To help those of you who may have missed these earlier columns and to remind me of many dangers that I forgot about, I went through all of the articles for the past eight years and have come up with some other, just as dangerous, things to watch.

For instance, *when loading your dishwasher, clothes washer, or dryer; and when shutting the door to your freezer and refrigerator, count noses before turning the equipment on or walking away.* No matter how careful I am about this, I can't name the times that a kit or cat has been left in the refrigerator (for only a few seconds as I quickly discover that I'm missing one nose), or has jumped into the clothes dryer. I've been lucky, but can tell you in all honesty that many others have not been so lucky and their pets have either burned up in the dryer or frozen in the freezer. *No matter how sure you are that your cat has not leaped into one of these appliances, do check to make certain, before turning it on, or shutting the door.*

Even though we're not talking about fleas this month, it doesn't hurt to remind us that we *should never use spray or powder, or affix a flea collar, to our cats if they have just had a germicidal bath. We should never combine a spray with a powder, or either of these items with a flea collar.* When using spray or powder, always do so in a well-ventilated area and keep the product away from your cat's face. Never hang chemically-treated pest strips in a completely closed off room, and, always open a window when using a disinfectant or cleaning agents in your cat's quarters.

Windows that are in need of repair should be checked as a loose window can come crashing down upon your cat as he sits on the sill. Loose screens should also be secured so they cannot be pushed out by your cat.

Front and back doors to your house, as well as all interior doors, should be propped open with doorstops. I never realized that a half-open door was a danger to cats until many years ago when Bad Little Girl got her tail almost sheared off by a door blowing closed. The agony she suffered by the time I could get her to a vet lives in my mind to this day so, please, don't take a chance of this same agony happening to your pet.

Stoves are an ever-present threat to our cats. I have a gas stove and no matter how carefully I keep an eye on the cats, not a week goes by that one of them doesn't leap to the stove, when I turn my back for just an instant, and end up with either singed hair on her tail, or eye and muzzles whiskers burned off. Electric stoves pose an even more serious threat as their burners take so long to cool down. I don't have an electric stove *page 46*